



SPECIAL REPORT

Winds of change in the Latin American political arena for 2017

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LLORENTE & CUENCA

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From an electoral point of view, 2017 will be a relatively low-profile year for Latin America: there will be only three presidential elections (Ecuador, Honduras and Chile) and another three polls, one of a legislative nature (Argentina), two local elections in several Mexican states and on a municipal level in Nicaragua.

Hence, this year will be similar to 2015 and 2016 in terms of its small number of elections. In 2015, the only presidential elections that took place were in Guatemala and Argentina and in 2016 executive powers were renewed in the Dominican Republic, in Peru and in Nicaragua.

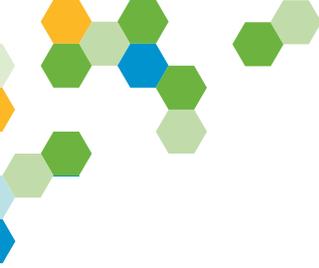
Either way, we should not only take the number of elections into account but also the significance of such elections.

The election of Mauricio Macri in Argentina in 2015 represented what has been perceived as a parting of the waters in terms of regional political tendencies, with the start of what could be a new era in the region (the famous, and subtle “right turn”) that in some respects the 2016 elections have affirmed.

In the same way, the 2017 ballots will help to draw a new electoral map, not only for the countries concerned but also for the region as a whole. Presidential changes in the regions’ principal economies (Mexico and Brazil) in 2018 fuels expectations that it will be a decisive year, as well as two equally important and significant countries, Colombia and Venezuela, due the internal processes they are currently experiencing. In addition, Paraguay and Costa Rica will also have their own respective elections.

From an electoral point of view, 2017 is more important and transcendent and it would first appear. As Argentinian ex-president Eduardo Duhalde warned that at the time “if Macri doesn’t win next year’s (2017) legislative elections, Argentina could face some difficult times.”

Ecuadorian opposition has more opportunities than ever to end a decade of hegemony under Rafael Correa’s mighty leadership, while Honduras could see the end of an entire historical tradition, dating back more than half a century with the return and consummation of reelectionism in the form of its current president, Juan Orlando Hernández.



“The current situation is not the only factor influencing the transformation of economic models, but the political systems themselves are also under pressure due to this slower economic growth”

It seems clear that Latin America is experiencing a period of change in both economic and political contexts, and 2017 will be no exception. The end of the Golden Decade (2003–2013), sustained by the bonanza and the boom in raw material prices, gave way to a period of economic downturn (2013–2017) that gave countries no choice but to rethink their own growth and development models.

A productive matrix that, in the new world context, can no longer depend on exporting commodities alone, without added value. Today’s challenge is to build more productive and competitive economies with an emphasis on quality education and improved infrastructure, in a more efficient and effective State that favours innovation and entrepreneurship in an attempt to diversify production and exportation markets.

The current situation is not the only factor influencing the transformation of economic models, but the political systems themselves are also under pressure due to this slower economic growth, citizens’ increasing aversion towards political parties, the rise in fiscal pressure and the deterioration of public services.

The region cannot escape and neither is it alone (becoming detached is impossible), and global, geopolitical and economic changes are causing a fast and powerful echo in the region.

The new political dynamic in the region is diverse, whilst some parallels exist between some countries and others, and which can be summarised by the electoral victories of candidates or powers more ideologically ascribed to the right or centre-right; by the progressive weakening of leaders, parties and movements belonging to “Socialism of the 21st century”; by the emergence of candidates with an anti-establishment or anti-elite political stance with real chances of victory; in tight electoral victories that go to a second round, even at a presidential level; and the ever increasing existence of “divided governments” resulting from feuds between the legislative and the executive with different political standpoints.

In this respect, elections that will take place in 2017 will strengthen the validity of many of these characteristics which, in turn, set a precedent for what may happen at the polls in 2018.

“One cannot speak of homogenous “right-turn” as such an ambiguous expression masks many significant heterogeneities”

2. THE STRENGTHENING OF THE CENTRE-RIGHT TURN

The region is experiencing a process of economic transition and a change of political cycle. From the domination of left-wing presidents and parties (moderate or new left, or ascribed to “Socialism of the 21st century”), progressively dominant from 1998 to 2013 (Jimmy Morales) and in the centre-right (Mauricio Macri or the MUD in Venezuela) have obtained important electoral victories.

One cannot speak of homogenous “right-turn” as such an ambiguous expression masks many significant heterogeneities. Mauricio Macri is an example, the positions himself as a prototypical and archetypical image of this right-turn as a “liberal” and a businessman, but in a pragmatic way, leads a coalition government with the co-existence of centre-right (Pro, his own party) and centre-left (Coalición Cívica) and that

are linked to the international Social Democrat (La Unión Cívica Radical).

Beyond on these important nuances, it’s true that this centre-right predomination will be put to the test in Honduras and Chile, where presidential hopefuls and centre-right forces have the advantage and may potentially prolong the emerging tendency for change in the region since 2015, which has deepened during the last year.

The local elections that took place in 2016 in Mexico (June), in Chile and in Brazil (both in October) reinforced this shift, as all three of these electoral processes proved a strong advance of the centre-right alternatives and a significant decline of the centre-left. These results fell into place with the growing retribution towards the governing parties (Chile’s Nueva Mayoría) or those that were in power until very recently (Brazil’s PT).

The defeat of these different left-wing parties (Nueva Mayoría in the 2016 local Chilean elections and Chavism in the 2015 Venezuelan legislative elections) have also coincided with the emergence of new figures from the centre-right (Mauricio Macri in Argentina or Pedro Pablo Kuczynski in Peru).

As shown in the following table, tendencies towards the right and centre-right have

Table 1. Latin American Elections in 2017

COUNTRY	DATE
ECUADOR	19 February (presidential and legislative elections) 2 April (second round of presidential elections)
MEXICO	4 June (local elections in the Mexican states of Veracruz, Coahuila and Nayarit)
ARGENTINA	27 October (legislative elections)
CHILE	19 November (presidential and legislative elections)
HONDURAS	26 November (presidential and legislative elections)
NICARAGUA	November (municipal elections)
CHILE	17 December (second round of presidential)

“New defeats of ruling government parties emerged in 2016, with two exceptions: Daniel Medina’s triumph in the Dominican Republic as well as Daniel Ortega’s win in Nicaragua”

prevailed in eight of the nine elections or polls that have taken place in Latin America from the end of 2015 to the end of 2016. The only exception was a re-election of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua (the Mexican elections in 2016 have not been included as they only ran in certain states, and not the whole country):

The 2015 elections proved very symbolic as a snapshot of the retribution that left-wing government parties are suffering: in Argentina, Kirchnerism was ousted from the Casa Rosada after 12 years in power. Another left-wing government party defeat occurred in Venezuela, also in 2015. In December of the same year the anti-Chavist opposition, assembled in the form of Mesa de Unidad Democrática, achieved an electoral win over Chavism for

the first time since 1998 and became the majority party in the legislative government.

New defeats of ruling government parties emerged in 2016, with two exceptions: Daniel Medina’s triumph in the Dominican Republic as well as Daniel Ortega’s win in Nicaragua. By contrast, Evo Morales saw how his continuous approach was rejected in a February referendum.

The 2017 elections indicate the centre-right coalition opposition, Chile Vamos, and their possible presidential candidate Sebastián Piñera as favourite to win the presidential elections even though their advantage has been decreasing with the emergence of Alejandro Guillier, a politician who aims to embody renewal from the current centre-left government party.

Piñera is a solid and experienced candidate (he was president from 2010 to 2014) and who has no real rivals within his own coalition. He has been the clear favourite to win throughout 2016, though this has come to a standstill due to a slight drop in voting intentions, his advantage has dwindling as a result, almost to the point of disappearance.

As of today (January 2017) Guillier is the Nueva Mayoría’s most competitive option and

Tabla 2. The electoral results in Latin America during the last semester

COUNTRY	RESULT
GUATEMALA (2015)	Jimmy Morales' victory in the presidential elections (right)
ARGENTINA (2015)	Mauricio Macri's triumph in the presidential elections (centre-right)
VENEZUELA (2015)	The anti-Chavist Mesa de Unidad Democrática are victorious in the legislative elections
BOLIVIA (2016)	Evo Morales is defeated in the referendum for constitutional reform
PERU (2016)	Victory for liberal Pedro Pablo Kuczynski in the presidential elections
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (2016)	Re-election of Danilo Medina (centre-right)
CHILE (2016)	Victory for Chile Vamos, the centre-right coalition in the local elections
BRAZIL (2016)	Centre-right parties triumph in municipal elections
NICARAGUA (2016)	Re-election of Daniel Ortega (left)

“A proportion of the electorate seems to be more receptive towards messages of those outside of politics”

the only one that could defeat Piñera in the second round. The ex-president leads in voting intentions in the face of this November's elections and independent Senator Alejandro Guillier firmly strengthens his position in the electoral race, according to the CEP's (Centre of Public Studies) January survey. Piñera is preferred by 20% of voters, 6 points up on the previous CEP survey which was published in August of last year.

Senator Guillier, who is close to the Partido Radical (social democrat), is in second place with 14% of voters' intentions, 13 points up on the last survey in mid-2016. Guillier's candidacy has left former president, Ricardo Lagos's chances of winning in the shadows, with 5% of voters, the same as in August 2016

One place that retribution towards the governing party seems unlikely and where a centre-right shift could be confirmed, is in Honduras. In this Central American country, everything would suggest a victory for Juan Orlando Hernández, who has gained permission to stand for re-election through the electoral tribunals, and who has strong social support: results of the latest Cid Gallup poll show that Hernández is the most popular candidate with 54% of opinions in his favour.

3. ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT CANDIDATES

One repercussion of the economic crisis at the end of the last decade and the beginning of this one, has been increased aversion towards political party systems and the “political class.” This has brought about new leadership and different political alternatives which put the development models (Brexit) and traditional leadership (Donald Trump) into jeopardy.

A proportion of the electorate seems to be more receptive towards messages of those outside of politics, detached from the non-transparent patronage practices and who use clear and direct language, different to the old ways and methods of traditional politicians and parties.

This global tendency (in Spain we have seen this with the growth of parties like Podemos and in the United States with Trump's victory) is also echoed in Latin America. In reality, this already happened in the 2015 elections with Jimmy Morales's victory in Guatemala who used his inexperience (he was a television actor and therefore an outsider to the world of politics) as his main electoral weapon - practically is only weapon- (his slogan was “Neither corrupt nor a thief”).

“The region is facing time when, one way or another, it must implement deep structural reform to get out of the current situation of slow growth”

In the 2017 elections the strongest case of an emerging leadership that speaks out against the traditional political class can be found in Chile, where popular discontentment with the downturn and the failure of the reformist agenda implemented by Michelle Bachelot government, has created a breeding ground for the rise of “outsiders” with anti-establishment theories.

In Chile, this rejection of parties and the political class, disenchantment with the system and deep discontent has provoked the emergence of figures such as Alejandro Guillen, who represents an alternative to historic politicians like Ricardo Lagos and Sebastián Piñera.

Cadem’s weekly opinion poll at the end of 2016 revealed that the legislator is still the best candidate of the ruling party, with 15% in his favour whilst Lagos managed only 6%. In addition, the Ceri-Mori survey indicated that Guillier would win the second round against ex-president Sebastián Piñera.

Independent Senator Alejandro Guillier, who carries the anti-political message by embodying the independent revolt against traditional elite, presents himself as a politician who has worked his way up as opposed to the businessman-turned-politicians: “I admire him greatly (referring to Piñera), I think he’s very

capable, but I prefer that he focuses on business and leave politics to the politicians to avoid conflicts of interest... A president “cannot concentrate on earning money as well as running the country, it’s either one or the other.”

4. DIVIDED GOVERNMENTS AND STRUCTURAL REFORMS

In general terms, the region is facing time when, one way or another, it must implement deep structural reform to get out of the current situation of slow growth (crisis or steep downturn in some cases).

This necessity coincides with a historical situation in which the vote has become fragmented and divided and the old parties have disappeared, gone into decline or have lost their share of power and influence. This has resulted in “divided governments” where the executive political colour is different to that which predominates in legislative politics: as a direct consequence, legislative paralysis is common as State agreements between the President and an opposition that is either majority or predominant in the chambers, are not reached.

Latin America is becoming increasingly populated by countries with “divided

“In this way, the Latin American presidential model, often hyper-presidentialism, collides with heterogeneous parliaments”

governments” where the heads of state neither have the majority nor sufficient legislative support. This causes significant governability issues if political pacts for boosting reforms cannot be achieved.

In Latin America a similar situation of divided government exists, with lesser or greater intensity; in Argentina, with the complex coexistence between Macri and the different Peronisms; in Brazil, especially during the administration of ex-president Dilma Rousseff; in Pedro Pablo Kuczynski’s Peru, who performs a difficult balancing act with Fujimorism, which has an absolute majority in the legislative chamber.

Similar situations can be seen in Guatemala, in El Salvador, in Costa Rica, in Panama and in Mexico, particularly since the failure of the Pact for Mexico, driven by Peña Neto’s government along with the opposition parties (PAN and PRD) and that facilitated the advancement of major reforms such as those as in telecommunications or energy.

In some cases of “divided government”, the situation can digress into a true diversion of legitimacy between an elected president by direct popular vote and legislative opposition to the Head of State, who was also legally appointed by ballot.

In this way, the Latin American presidential model, often hyper-presidentialism, collides with heterogeneous parliaments. The current scenario presents many examples of this executive-legislative tension, the most striking being institutional train crash in Venezuela after the 6-D legislative elections in 2015: anti-Chavism, in the form of the Mesa de la Unidad Democrática who have held the majority in the National Assembly since then, has repeatedly clashed with the Chavism that controls the presidency (Nicolás Maduro), the judiciary (the Supreme Court of Justice) and the communal power, leading the country to a legislative paralysis and an institutional crisis.

In 2016 Peru began to feel the deepest effects of what is a “divided government” between the president, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, who defeated Keiko by only a tight margin in the second round of the presidential elections, and a legislative chamber where Fuerza Popular (Fujimorism), hold an absolute majority of 72 seats in the chamber of 120 deputies. The Kuczynski administration benefited from the support of the Fujimorist opposition during the initial stages, who gave a vote of confidence to the Cabinet headed by Fernando Zavala and

“There will be no great changes in relation to legislative equilibrium. None of the powers, according to the polls, has an absolute or decisive victory in its hands”

later supported the granting of extraordinary powers to the government. Nevertheless, at the end of 2016 the cracks in the relationship were such that Cardinal Juan Luis Cipriani, the Archbishop of Lima, had to act as mediator and propitiated a meeting between Keiko Fujimori and the president to break the stalemate.

The three countries holding presidential elections and the two that have legislative or local elections in 2017 face complex circumstances where, in the short term, major adjustments will be necessary (in Ecuador), along with the extension of reforms already in progress (Argentina) or the stimulation of new ones (Chile). These circumstances will produce parliaments with no clear majorities (Argentina) or perhaps extremely fragmented ones (Chile and Ecuador).

Argentina’s legislative elections in October are particularly important in this context, for the governability of the country, to gauge the level of support or deterioration of Macri’s government following three years of administration, and to discern the political future in relation to the 2019 presidential elections.

During his first months of government, Mauricio Macri has demonstrated sound political flexibility which has enabled him to make pacts

with his presumed rivals (Peronism and Gremialism) and maintain the solid heterogeneous alliance which sustains his government. The setting changes in 2017 because of the mid-term elections to be held in Argentina where Macri’s government, and Cambiemos, the coalition that sustains it, will risk part of their political capital by renewing half of the Chamber of Deputies and a third of the Senate.

The open and obligatory primary elections in August will turn into a something of a rehearsal for the legislative elections, to take place in the third week of October. To lose these elections would see the government tackle its last biennium (2017–2019) from a vulnerable position, licking its political wounds and needing, more than ever, the support of the most communicative sectors of the opposition: Sérgio Massa and the non-Kirchnerist Peronism, who will be concentrating more on a strategy for winning the presidential elections in 2019 than ensuring the viability of the Macrist project in its full extent.

Everything suggests, either way, that there will be no great changes in relation to legislative equilibrium. None of the powers, according to the polls, has an absolute or decisive victory in its hands, the most that can be expected

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is a slight strengthening of the government’s parliamentary situation, or possibly, a slight weakening.

Even by winning the 2017 elections, Cambiemos will not gain a majority in Congress: it will improve, predictably, in the chamber of deputies, but in the Senate it would remain a minority. The most likely scenario is that the governing party will increase the number of deputies, but not to a great extent. It seems likely that the government will still depend on the agreements it has been building with Peronism and above all, with the governors, who are instrumental in Senate behaviour. But the underlying idea in the government and in public opinion is that the elections will validate, or imply a rejection of the Macrist Administration, meaning that investors await the election results to see whether economic reform measures will be maintained between 2017 and 2019, and if they will be extended beyond 2019.

5. THE WEAKENING OF LEADERSHIPS AND PARTIES AFFILIATED OR LINKED TO SOCIALISM OF THE 21ST CENTURY.

With the exception of Daniel Ortega’s overwhelming 2016 victory in the Nicaraguan presidential elections, the rest of the powers, leaders and movements close to, affiliated

or belonging to “Socialism of the 21st century” have suffered clear setbacks since 2015

The region went through a heterogeneous “left turn” between 2005 and 2009, with the victories of Evo Morales in Bolivia (2005), Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay (2004), Rafael Correa in Ecuador (2006) and Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua (2007) who joined figures such as Hugo Chávez in Venezuela (from 1999), Ricardo Lagos in Chile (from 2000) or Lula da Silva in Brazil (from 2003). It was an extremely heterogeneous left-wing that was difficult to encompass within a single category: in reality, three large political trends were co-existing, and still co-exist the in the region.

Ten years after the famous concept of “left turn” was forged, the term overlooked not only the heterogeneity of this left but also the existence of centre-right parties that were in power, such as PAN in Mexico and Uribism in Colombia.

But since 2013 this situation has become even more pronounced, as the centre-right has taken control with a majority in North America (the PRI of Enrique Peña Nieto in Mexico), in Central America (Otto Pérez Molina/ Jimmy Morales in Guatemala, Porfirio Lobo/José Orlando Hernández in Honduras, Laura Chinchilla in Costa Rica and

“Centre-right governments existed in six out of the eight countries in this geographical region in 2013”

Ricardo Martinelli/Juan Carlos Varela in Panama) and in the Caribbean (Danilo Medina in the Dominican Republic).

In other words, centre-right governments existed in six out of the eight countries in this geographical region in 2013, the exceptions being Mauricio Funes, and later Salvador Sánchez Cerén, in El Salvador (who was an executive of the democratic and reformist centre-left) and Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua.

In terms of South America, three years ago it had three centre-right governments (those of Juan Manuel Santos in Colombia, Horacio Cartes in Paraguay and Sebastián Piñera in Chile), three centre-left governments (Ollanta Humala in Peru, Dilma Rousseff in Brazil and José Mujica in Uruguay) and four of the similarly heterogeneous, Socialism of the 21st century and allies (Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela, Rafael Correa in Ecuador, Evo Morales in Bolivia and Cristina Kirchner in Argentina).

The region was, in fact, divided into three practically equal thirds, where none of the trends was overwhelmingly dominant and where electoral changes maintained the co-existence of these same trends. Currently, in this biennial 2015–2017, the situation leans more clearly towards the right and everything would indicate

that the situation will deepen in the coming years: Mauricio Macri’s victory over Peronist Daniel Scioli in 2015 seemed to launch a new era in the region marked by governments with centre-right tendencies.

A tendency that was not started, but strengthened, by the victories of Jimmy Morales over social democrat Sandra Torres in Guatemala and the triumph of Mesa de la Unidad Democrática in the Venezuelan legislative elections over the PUSV. The end of Kirchnerism in Argentina (together with the demise of Chavism in December 2015 or the destitution of Dilma Rousseff in 2016) can be considered as the start of a regional tendency change.

Last year (2016) was unusual, as there were only three presidential elections (in the Dominican Republic where Danilo Medina’s PLD dominated, in Peru where Pedro Pablo Kuczynski took the win and in Nicaragua where Sandinista Daniel Ortega triumphed effortlessly).

However, in 2017 and 2018 we could witness an avalanche of centre right victories in some cases and, in others, the left could face serious difficulties at the polls. As political scientist Steven Levitsky points out “the regression of the left has two main causes. Firstly, there is a natural fatigue after having governed for three

**“In democracy,
nothing is permanent.
Nobody rules forever”**

or four presidential terms. Few parties win more than three consecutive presidential elections (in the USA, the last time was 70 years ago), and in democracy, almost none win more than four.

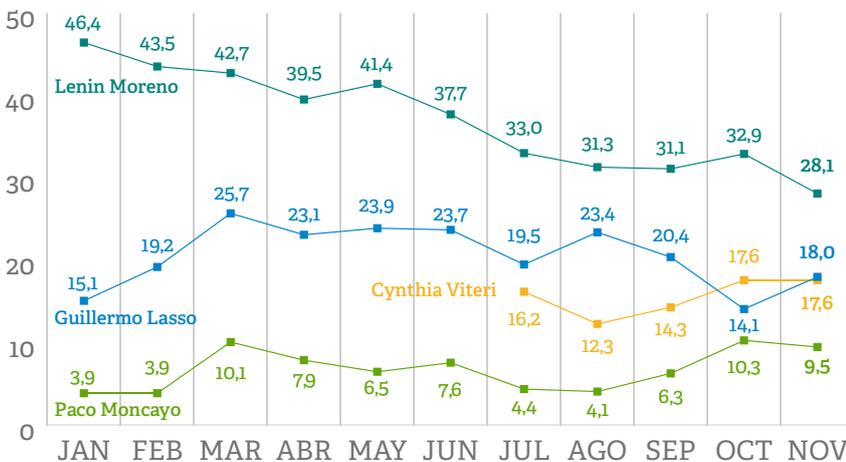
After three terms, governments lose their political reflex; they become distant from the people and often, corruption flourishes. Even when they are not that corrupt (as in the case of Concertation governments in Chile), people tire of them. Sooner or later, fatigue affects all governments. Twelve years (Argentina) or thirteen years (Brazil) in power is a long time. In democracy, nothing is permanent. Nobody rules forever”.

In addition to the fatigue in the government’s own administration, there are other

structural factors which are linked to the new regional and international economic context, as is the case with the end of the raw materials boom.

In Ecuador there will be noticeable difficulties for those that pass through parties of the so-called Bolivian left or the “Socialism of the 21st century” when they no longer have their leaders as the main electoral mascot and when cornerstones of economic models in place (extremely dependent on oil exportation) are damaged or weakened. The Andean country holds presidential elections in February 2017 shrouded in mystery as to whether the governing Alianza País, with Lenin Moreno as their candidate, will manage to extend the hegemony of Correism, in power since 2007.

Figure 1. Electoral preferences: percentages by month of the four most popular candidates (measured between January and November 2016)



Source: table published by El Universo newspaper - Market (Blasco Peñaherrera & Asociados)

Everything suggests that the governing party’s candidate will not win in the first round, breaking the hegemonic tendency in 2009 in 2013 when Rafael Correa dominated without the need to battle out a second round. The current president was re-elected in 2009 in the first term with 51.9%, more than 20 points ahead of Lucio Gutiérrez, who obtained 28.2% of the votes. He repeated his victory in 2013 with 57% against Guillermo Lasso’s 24%.

Surveys indicate that Lenin Moreno is the candidate with the highest voting intention,

“The actual government’s presidential candidate has upheld his proposal to support private enterprise”

a long way from the historic levels set by Correa, and with a certain downward tendency. The current president triumphed over the opposition on all fronts since winning the elections in 2006. He won the presidential elections (in the second rounds in 2006, 2009 and in 2013), in referendums (2008–2011) and in the legislative elections for the Constituent Assembly (2007). In the presidential elections, between 2009 in 2013, Correa increased from 51 to 57% and extended his advantage from 23 to 33 points over the second most voted candidate. Having to go to the second round in 2017 would mean that the history of Ecuador between 1978–2006 would repeat itself, a period when the new resident of the Palacio de Carondelet was always decided in the second round.

Lenin Moreno, who tries to appear both included and far from Rafael Correa’s most polarising speeches, is basing his campaign on attracting his own people (avoiding overconfidence and recovering the mysticism of Correism) and by pursuing those disenchanted with the “Citizen’s Revolution”.

Finally, he has had no hesitation in addressing the sectors that are opposed to the actual government, and especially businessmen. The actual government’s presidential candidate has

upheld his proposal to support private enterprise, should he be elected president: “Winston Churchill said that we should not be dazzled by a businessman’s wealth, because he’s just like a draft horse pulling a very heavy load. And he was right because any business owner knows how hard it is to find resources, pay staff salaries, deal with financial responsibilities and industrial expenses; for this reason, business will always have my support if I am elected president.”

Surveys also show that the opposition, at least the centre-right, would almost be able to match Moreno in the first round. Nevertheless, they are a long way from showing any unity. Hence, whilst we are led to believe that Lenin Moreno will gain the most votes in the first round, the question is who will win the fight for second place. And in this fight will involve two candidates with similar political profiles: Guillermo Lasso, of the CREO movement, and Cynthia Viteri (PSC-MG).

A survey carried out by the company Cedatos, at the end of December, placed the ruling party candidate, Lenin Moreno, in first place in the voting intentions with 35.6%, followed by Lasso with 22.3% (in November, Moreno obtained 36.2% and Lasso, 22%). According to the survey, the Social Christian Viteri

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was in third place with 10.9%, followed by ex-mayor of Quito, Paco Moncayo, from the social democrat party, Izquierda Democrática, with 6.9%. The remaining four candidates have less than 4%.

6. CONCLUSIONS: A PICTURE OF 2017 AND PREDICTIONS FOR 2018

The elections that will take place in Latin America in 2017 will continue to paint a picture of the political situation of each country and, at the same time, the region as a whole, which will take final shape in the decisive year of 2018.

A picture that will show, for example in Ecuador, if we will see the persistence of the current reflux affecting the movements, parties and leaderships linked to “Socialism in the 21st-century”, which in 2013 saw the disappearance of its most charismatic leader (Hugo Chávez) and which lost another of its role models, Rafael Correa, in 2017.

But it’s not only the end of the specific leadership, but also the transformation of the political and electoral framework in Ecuador, as Correism does not appear capable of a first-round win and the unified opposition vote (Lasso, Viteri and Moncayo) has a chance of winning in the second round.

What happens in 2017 can also give a good indication of whether the emerging anti-establishment options, not only in the region but also in the world, will have new role models. The presidential elections in Chile will demonstrate the times that many countries in this region are going through: slow economic growth that unveils a model based on commodity exportation, one which is evidently depleted. In the middle, we have a society that has been through great transformations since 1990 and that demands change, ultimately in the way of doing politics, that two traditional candidates like Sebastián Piñera and Ricardo Lagos are a long way from fulfilling. This opens the doors to fresh alternatives, such as that of Alejandro Guillier: the new face on the political scene, considerably younger than Piñera, and especially Lagos, and bears a new way of doing politics using language that challenges the traditional elite.

He seems to better connect with a section of the population tired of traditional politics and anxious for changes and renewal. For the moment, Piñera has managed to contain the decrease in voting intentions but his growth is small compared to Guillier who has seen a spectacular increase in the

“The 2017 elections are not just a reflection, but could also provide a forecast of what could happen in 2018”

second half of 2016, but who raises serious doubts as to whether he is capable of maintaining such progress.

The picture of some countries with governments divided between an executive that leans towards one political tendency and a legislative, to another, which provokes serious governability issues or even institutional paralysis, will have a special chapter in Argentina, with legislative elections that are key to discovering whether the project headed by Mauricio Macri is viable, or not. Presidents elected in 2018 will probably not count on a majority vote in the legislative elections, in countries such as Costa Rica, Brazil or Mexico.

In addition, the picture will be completed in Honduras, where we could see the confirmation of not only the pre-election tendencies that have characterised the region since the 90s and that has been increasing in recent decades, but also of the right turn. The National Party, that sits on the right of the political spectrum, has not only convinced the judicial and electoral authorities to allow them the possibility of re-election (the Supreme Electoral Tribunal ratified an error made in April 2015 Supreme Tribunal of Honduras that establishes presidential election in any form) but also has the actual

president, Juan Orlando Hernández as favourite to retain power beyond 2017.

The 2017 elections are not just a reflection, but could also provide a forecast of what could happen in 2018, in Mexico for example where elections for governor of the State of Mexico will take place in 2017. It is a territory that has always been in the PRI's hands and that has produced a president, Enrique Peña Neto. The PRI have the advantage over the PAN in electoral preferences for the State of Mexico governor elections, according to surveys by EL Universal and Reforma.

In retrospect, Peña Neto started to be considered as the big favourite in 2012 when his chosen candidate for governor, Eruvuel Ávila, was elected for the post in 2011. The same game is now in play, but with its sights on 2018. The PRD and the PAN seek ways of conquering Edomex to deal a demolishing blow to the PRI and leave it with no chance of winning the presidency in 2018.

Triumphing in Edomex would leave the PAN, which held power between 2000 and 2012, closer to returning to Los Pinos. There is also another option: an anti-PRI alliance, and one that is against their own nature, between the left-wing PRD and the centre-right PRD. The PRI sees a 2017 triumph in Edomex as a springboard to extended

“Demagogy and populism are a long way from the meeting their downfall or at the point of disappearance in Latin America”

control of the presidency in the sexennial 2018–2024. Lastly, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, national leader of the Morena party, sees an opportunity to become the main left-wing party by overtaking the PRD.

In all of the 2017 and 2018 elections, tight results will be a constant trend. Landslide victories in the first round or heavily unbalanced second-rounds are, in most cases, a thing of the past.

Lenin Moreno is very likely to face a second round; Piñera starts as the favourite in Chile but with a only small difference over the most competitive of the ruling party candidates (Guillier); and in Argentina, neither Macri nor the different ruling party candidates will manage to unbalance the scales present in the legislative area of the mid-term elections.

Finally, 2017 and 2018 could end up demonstrating that the defeat of Kirchnerism in Argentina, of Chavism in the legislative elections of Venezuela, or of Evo Morales in the February 2016 referendum

do not mean the end of “populist” models, nor that they are in retreat in the region that was pursuing a “right turn”.

Demagogy and populism are a long way from the meeting their downfall or at the point of disappearance in Latin America. In fact, everything suggests that it will reappear with new faces, though maybe not under the banner of “Socialism in the 21st-century.”

As José Joaquín Brunner points out in *El Líbero*, regarding the case of Chile: “In the coming months we will need to pay attention to the populist developments around the world, but in addition, prevent similar phenomena from happening in Chile. No democrat is safe from the threat of populism. It is when democracy is weakened, most of all, that the elite roam naked in the streets, the economic situation is tight, the parties do not have the people’s trust and the government head towards the end of their term having left behind them a trail of dashed hopes and the administration of public affairs in a real mess.”

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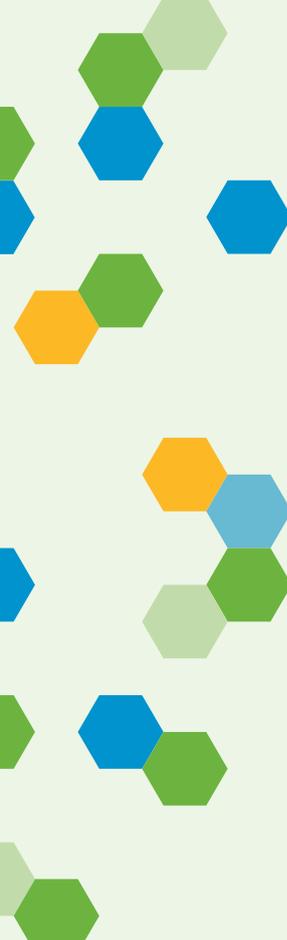
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